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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/091,983	03/06/2002	Dong Zhong	CS01-067	6380
28112	7590	03/07/2005	EXAMINER	
GEORGE O. SAILE & ASSOCIATES 28 DAVIS AVENUE POUGHKEEPSIE, NY 12603			TOLEDO, FERNANDO L	
			ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
			2823	

DATE MAILED: 03/07/2005

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

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Office Action Summary	Application No. 10/091,983	Applicant(s) ZHONG ET AL.	
	Examiner Fernando L. Toledo	Art Unit 2823	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 30 December 2004.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-15 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-15 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 03 June 2002 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|---|--|
| 1) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. <u>20050301</u> . |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____. | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____. |

DETAILED ACTION

Continued Examination Under 37 CFR 1.114

1. A request for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, including the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e), was filed in this application after final rejection. Since this application is eligible for continued examination under 37 CFR 1.114, and the fee set forth in 37 CFR 1.17(e) has been timely paid, the finality of the previous Office action has been withdrawn pursuant to 37 CFR 1.114. Applicant's submission filed on 30 December 2004 has been entered. The RCE is submitted as response to the Final Office Action of September 28, 2004.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

2. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

3. Claims 1 – 7 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kraft et al. (U. S. patent 6,136,654) in view of Chou et al. (U. S. patent 6,426,305 B1).

In re claim 1, Kraft, in the U. S. patent 6,136,654; figures 1 – 8 and related text, discloses on a substrate 12, providing a layer of silicon oxide 14; by means of a plasma technique (Column 4, Lines 50 – 55), forming a nitrogen bearing layer 20 that extends downwards a distance from the upper surface; and then annealing the nitrogen bearing layer in a mixture of nitrogen, oxygen

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at a temperature and a pressure for some time, whereby the nitrogen bearing layer becomes substantially free of structural defects (Column 5, Lines 9 – 17).

Kraft does not disclose wherein the plasma technique is a decoupled plasma technique nor that the temperature is between about 1,000 – 1,100°C and a pressure between 5 – 15 torr and for about 60 – 150 minutes.

Chou, in the U. S. patent 6,426,305 B1; figures 1 – 3D and related text, discloses, wherein decoupled plasma nitridation (DPN) is a low-temperature process that will not adversely affect photoresists used during the nitridation process (Column 3, Lines 40 – 45).

It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to form a nitrogen bearing layer in the invention of Kraft, by DPN, since as taught by Chou, DPN is a low-temperature process that will not adversely affect photoresists used during the nitridation process.

Kraft in view of Chou does not disclose that the temperature is between about 1,000 – 1,100°C and a pressure between 5 – 15 torr and for about 60 – 150 minutes.

However, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to anneal the nitride bearing layer of Kraft in view of Chou at a temperature of between about 1,000 – 1,100°C and a pressure between 5 – 15 torr and for about 60 – 150 minutes, since it has been held that where the general conditions of a claim are disclosed in the prior art, discovering the optimum or workable ranges involves only routine skill in the art. *In re Aller*, 105 USPQ 233. Note that the specification contains no disclosure of either the critical nature of the claimed temperature ranges, pressure ranges and time ranges or any unexpected results arising therefrom. Where patentability is said to be based upon particular

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chosen temperature ranges, pressure ranges and time ranges or upon another variable recited in a claim, the Applicant must show that the chosen temperature ranges, pressure ranges and time ranges are critical. *In re Woodruff*, 919 F.2d 1575, 1578, 16 USPQ2d 1934, 1936 (Fed. Cir. 1990). In addition, the selection of temperature, pressure and time, its obvious because it is a matter of determining optimum process conditions by routine experimentation with a limited number of species of result effective variables. These claims are prima facie obvious without showing that the claimed ranges achieve unexpected results relative to the prior art range. In *re Woodruff*, 16 USPQ2d 1935, 1937 (Fed. Cir. 1990). See also *In re Huang*, 40 USPQ2d 1685, 1688 (Fed. Cir. 1996)(claimed ranges or a result effective variable, which do not overlap the prior art ranges, are unpatentable unless they produce a new and unexpected result which is different in kind and not merely in degree from the results of the prior art). See also *In re Boesch*, 205 USPQ 215 (CCPA) (discovery of optimum value of result effective variable in known process is ordinarily within skill or art) and *In re Aller*, 105 USPQ 233 (CCPA 1995) (selection of optimum ranges within prior art general conditions is obvious).

4. In re claim 2, Kraft in view of Chou discloses wherein the step of decouples plasma nitridation further includes using RF power between 250 and 350 Watts at a pressure of $1-3 \times 10^{-2}$ torr for 10 – 300 seconds (Column 6, Lines 31 – 39 of Chou).

5. In re claim 3, Kraft discloses wherein the nitrogen bearing layer is selected from the group consisting of silicon nitride or silicon oxynitride (Column 4, Lines 12 – 29).

6. In re claim 4, Kraft discloses wherein the nitrogen bearing layer contains at least 3 atomic percent nitrogen (Figure 7).

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7. In re claim 5, Kraft discloses wherein the mixture of nitrogen and oxygen contains between about 10 to 30 volume percent oxygen (Column 4, Lines 12 – 29).

8. In re claim 6, Kraft discloses wherein the distance that the nitrogen bearing layer extends downward from the upper surface is between 2 and 10 Å (Figure 7).

9. In re claim 7, Kraft discloses wherein the layer of silicon oxide has a thickness between about 8 and 30 Å (Column 4, Lines 45 – 47).

10. Claims 8 – 15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bertrand et al. (U. S. patent 6,632,740 B1) in view of Kraft and in view of Chou.

In re claim 8, Bertrand discloses, in the U. S. patent 6,632,740 B1; figures 1(A) – 2(E) and related text, providing a silicon wafer 1, of a first conductivity type, and forming thereon a layer of silicon oxide 4 having an upper surface; depositing a layer of polysilicon 6 on the layer of silicon oxide; patterning and etching the layer of polysilicon and the layer of silicon oxide to form a gate pedestal on a layer of gate oxide (Figure 9); and using the gate pedestal as a mask, forming source and drain (8 and 9) regions of a second conductivity type that immediately abut the gate oxide, thereby forming the field effect transistor and whereby the field effect transistor has an electrical performance as good as a device that is similar in all respects to the field effect transistor except for the absence of the nitrogen bearing layer (Figure 2C).

Bertrand does not disclose, by means of decoupled plasma nitridation, forming a nitrogen bearing layer that extends downwards a distance from the upper surface; then annealing the nitrogen bearing layer in a mixture of nitrogen and oxygen, at a temperature between about 1000

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and 1100 °C and a pressure between 5 and 15 torr, for between about 60 and 150 minutes, whereby the nitrogen bearing layer becomes substantially free of defects.

However, Kraft discloses, by means of a plasma nitridation technique (Column 4, Lines 50 – 55), forming a nitrogen bearing layer 20 that extends downwards a distance from the upper surface; and then annealing the nitrogen bearing layer in a mixture of nitrogen, oxygen at a temperature and a pressure for some time, whereby the nitrogen bearing layer becomes substantially free of structural defects (Column 5, Lines 9 – 17), since according to Kraft the scaling of the devices in the lateral dimension requires vertical scaling as well so as to achieve adequate device performance. This vertical scaling requires the thickness of the gate dielectric to be reduced so as to provide the required device performance (Column 1, Lines 26 – 31).

It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to by means of decoupled plasma nitridation, forming a nitrogen bearing layer that extends downwards a distance from the upper surface; and then annealing the nitrogen bearing layer in a mixture of nitrogen, oxygen at a temperature and a pressure for some time, whereby the nitrogen bearing layer becomes substantially free of structural defects in the invention of Bertrand, since, as taught by Kraft, the scaling of the devices in the lateral dimension requires vertical scaling as well so as to achieve adequate device performance. This vertical scaling requires the thickness of the gate dielectric to be reduced so as to provide the required device performance.

Bertrand in view of Kraft does not disclose wherein the plasma technique is a decoupled plasma technique nor that the temperature is between about 1,000 – 1,100°C and a pressure between 5 – 15 torr and for about 60 – 150 minutes.

Chou discloses wherein decoupled plasma nitridation (DPN) is a low-temperature process that will not adversely affect photoresists used during the nitridation process (Column 3, Lines 40 – 45).

It would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to form a nitrogen bearing layer in the invention of Bertrand in view of Kraft, by DPN, since as taught by Chou, DPN is a low-temperature process that will not adversely affect photoresists used during the nitridation process.

Bertrand in view of Kraft and in view of Chou does not disclose that the temperature is between about 1,000 – 1,100⁰C and a pressure between 5 – 15 torr and for about 60 – 150 minutes.

However, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to anneal the nitride bearing layer of Bertrand in view of Kraft at a temperature of between about 1,000 – 1,100⁰C and a pressure between 5 – 15 torr and for about 60 – 150 minutes, since it has been held that where the general conditions of a claim are disclosed in the prior art, discovering the optimum or workable ranges involves only routine skill in the art. *In re Aller*, 105 USPQ 233. Note that the specification contains no disclosure of either the critical nature of the claimed temperature ranges, pressure ranges and time ranges or any unexpected results arising therefrom. Where patentability is said to be based upon particular chosen temperature ranges, pressure ranges and time ranges or upon another variable recited in a claim, the Applicant must show that the chosen temperature ranges, pressure ranges and time ranges are critical. *In re Woodruff*, 919 F.2d 1575, 1578, 16 USPQ2d 1934, 1936 (Fed. Cir. 1990). In addition, the selection of temperature, pressure and time, its obvious because it is a

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matter of determining optimum process conditions by routine experimentation with a limited number of species of result effective variables. These claims are prima facie obvious without showing that the claimed ranges achieve unexpected results relative to the prior art range. In re Woodruff, 16 USPQ2d 1935, 1937 (Fed. Cir. 1990). See also In re Huang, 40 USPQ2d 1685, 1688 (Fed. Cir. 1996)(claimed ranges or a result effective variable, which do not overlap the prior art ranges, are unpatentable unless they produce a new and unexpected result which is different in kind and not merely in degree from the results of the prior art). See also In re Boesch, 205 USPQ 215 (CCPA) (discovery of optimum value of result effective variable in known process is ordinarily within skill or art) and In re Aller, 105 USPQ 233 (CCPA 1995) (selection of optimum ranges within prior art general conditions is obvious).

11. In re claim 9, Bertrand in view of Kraft and Chou does not disclose wherein the gate pedestal has a width between about 0.05 to 0.25 microns.

However, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made have a gate pedestal with a width of between 0.05 to 0.25 microns in the invention of Bertrand in view of Kraft and Chou, since it has been held that where the general conditions of a claim are disclosed in the prior art, discovering the optimum or workable ranges involves only routine skill in the art. *In re Aller*, 105 USPQ 233. Note that the specification contains no disclosure of either the critical nature of the claimed width or any unexpected results arising therefrom. Where patentability is said to be based upon particular chosen width or upon another variable recited in a claim, the Applicant must show that the chosen width is critical. *In re Woodruff*, 919 F.2d 1575, 1578, 16 USPQ2d 1934, 1936 (Fed. Cir. 1990). In addition, the selection of width ranges, its obvious because it is a matter of determining optimum process

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conditions by routine experimentation with a limited number of species of result effective variables. These claims are prima facie obvious without showing that the claimed ranges achieve unexpected results relative to the prior art range. In re Woodruff, 16 USPQ2d 1935, 1937 (Fed. Cir. 1990). See also In re Huang, 40 USPQ2d 1685, 1688 (Fed. Cir. 1996)(claimed ranges or a result effective variable, which do not overlap the prior art ranges, are unpatentable unless they produce a new and unexpected result which is different in kind and not merely in degree from the results of the prior art). See also In re Boesch, 205 USPQ 215 (CCPA) (discovery of optimum value of result effective variable in known process is ordinarily within skill or art) and In re Aller, 105 USPQ 233 (CCPA 1995) (selection of optimum ranges within prior art general conditions is obvious).

12. In re claim 10, Bertrand in view of Kraft and in view of Chou discloses wherein the step of decouples plasma nitridation further includes using RF between 250 and 350 Watts power at a pressure of $1-3 \times 10^{-2}$ torr for 10 – 300 seconds (Column 6, Lines 31 – 39 of Chou).

13. In re claim 11, Bertrand in view of Kraft discloses wherein the nitrogen bearing layer is selected from the group consisting of silicon nitride or silicon oxynitride (Column 4, Lines 12 – 29 of Kraft).

14. In re claim 12, Bertrand in view of Kraft discloses wherein the nitrogen bearing layer contains at least 3 atomic percent nitrogen (Figure 7 of Kraft).

15. In re claim 13, Bertrand in view of Kraft discloses wherein the mixture of nitrogen and oxygen contains between about 10 to 30 volume percent oxygen (Column 4, Lines 12 – 29 of Kraft).

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16. In re claim 14, Bertrand in view of Kraft discloses wherein the distance that the nitrogen bearing layer extends downward from the upper surface is between 2 and 10 Å (Figure 7 of Kraft).

17. In re claim 15, Bertrand in view of Kraft discloses wherein the layer of silicon oxide has a thickness between about 8 and 30 Å (Column 4, Lines 45 – 47 of Kraft).

Response to Arguments

18. Applicant's arguments filed 1 December 2004 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive for the following reasons.

19. Applicant states that a post-annealing step in the invention of Kraft is counter-productive because the invention works well without one. Examiner respectfully submits that Kraft teaches advantages of having a post-annealing step in the invention. Kraft never addresses concerns over the thermal budget or why a post-anneal step would be undesirable.

20. Applicant also contests that Kraft does not teach the plasma composition but points that Kraft teaches a plasma incorporating nitrogen-containing substances in column 3, lines 59 - 63.

21. Applicant also contests that the post-annealing step of Kraft does not contain oxygen. Examiner respectfully submits that in the plasma, the nitrogen-containing substances such as N₂O and N₂O₂ will dissociate and hence liberate oxygen into the chamber atmosphere. Although Applicant addresses such possibility, Applicant argues that the oxygen is long gone before any post-anneal step is carried out. Examiner respectfully submits that there is no evidence that the chamber is purged prior to the post-anneal step, Kraft indicates that such step is carried out right

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after the plasma treatment, therefore, there will be a presence of oxygen in the chamber during the anneal step.


22. Applicant also contests that the annealing step is critical of the ranges. However, nowhere in the specification nor in the previous two Office Action has Applicant addressed the criticality of the temperature and pressure ranges of the anneal step.

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Fernando L. Toledo whose telephone number is 571-272-1867. The examiner can normally be reached on Mon-Thu 7am to 5:30pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Olik Chaudhuri can be reached on 571-272-1855. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).


Fernando L. Toledo
Examiner
Art Unit 2823

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1 March 2005